

Dear ALWTRT Member:

The following provides additional details and information on the upcoming Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team (ALWTRT) meeting.

**The next ALWTRT meeting will be scheduled for April 28-30, 2003, in Providence, Rhode Island.** NOAA Fisheries chose this date and the strategy noted below based on the input provided by many TRT members along the east coast. This included consideration of May 1 fishery openings, holidays and similar vacation periods, state and federal meetings, the length of TRT meetings, regional differences in fisheries along the coast, etc. Based on these considerations, and in an attempt to accommodate the variety of interests represented on the ALWTRT, the next ALWTRT meeting will be scheduled for April 28-30 in Providence, Rhode Island. TRT members will be provided information on how to make travel arrangements in a separate e-mail message within the next couple of weeks.

**We are proposing a three-day meeting schedule** organized such that the full TRT is brought together during key times but subgroups are used to further refine and focus discussions. TRT members are encouraged to attend the full three-day TRT meeting session, and will have the option of which subgroup(s) to participate in based on interest and relevance to each member. The subgroup meetings are designed such that the full TRT can participate although the focus will be on specific issues (see proposed meeting strategy attached). We initially plan to divide the subgroups by gear type as many Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP) fishery management areas are managed similarly along the coast and it would be beneficial for fisheries sharing similar gear types to coordinate on management issues. We acknowledge the uniqueness of fishery operations along the coast but believe much could be gained by organizing the subgroup meetings by gear type rather than region. However, if requested at the subgroup meeting, each subgroup can break out on a regional basis. NOAA Fisheries will be providing two facilitators for each subgroup meeting in the event the subgroup would like to further divide by region.

**NOAA Fisheries intends to add additional members to the TRT** to ensure the ALWTRT consists of members from each coastal State agency which has fisheries that interact with large whales, as well as to represent other pot fisheries including but not limited to hagfish, red crab, black sea bass, Jonah crab, conch/whelk, tautog, shrimp, and scup trap/pot fisheries. NOAA Fisheries expects to add these new State agencies and fishery members at the upcoming meeting. We will be organizing a separate meeting in advance of the April meeting with these new members to review the Endangered Species Act, the Take Reduction Team process including the Marine Mammal Protection Act mandates and other issues so new members will be prepared for the full meeting.

Attached please find a template of how we envision the ALWTRT meeting to be structured. Also, **accompanying this transmission are several attachments** that contains additional supporting information for the TRT meeting. A hard copy of these attachments will also be mailed to you. Additionally, this information will be posted on the ALWTRP web page (<http://www.nero.nmfs.gov/whaletrp/>) shortly. Please review all of the material provided and work with your constituents prior to the April TRT meeting. It is our hope that the information provided will guide you toward what NOAA Fisheries intends to discuss at the April meeting.

*NOAA Fisheries has hired RESOLVE to facilitate the TRT meeting.* Abby Arnold, Marci DuPraw, and Angela Jones will be assisting us both before and at the TRT meeting. RESOLVE has been asked to assist all of us to develop an agenda for the three-day meeting as well as assist with travel arrangements and advance mailings. Therefore, in the next month, RESOLVE will a) be in touch with you about travel to the TRT meeting and b) send out two advance packets. The first advance packet will be to new members who will be attending a pre-meeting to be scheduled before the April 28-30 meeting. The second mailing will include materials we have compiled for you to read prior to the April 28-30 meeting.

If you have **any questions on the material or the meeting in general, please contact Diane Borggaard**, the ALWTRP Coordinator, by phone (Please note new number: 978-281-9328 ext. 6503) or e-mail ([Diane.Borggaard@noaa.gov](mailto:Diane.Borggaard@noaa.gov)). With the advance packets RESOLVE staff will send you their contact information so you can be in touch with them about questions regarding the meeting.

NOAA Fisheries understands that there is much to discuss at the upcoming meeting, and we have tried to adjust the meeting schedule and content to address concerns we have heard. Thank you in advance for all your hard work. We would like to make this meeting as constructive an exchange as possible.